United Nations A/56/421

General Assembly

Distr.: General
28 September 2001

Original: English

Fifty-sixth session
Agenda item 87
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

University of Jerusalem "Al-Quds" for Palestine refugees

Report of the Secretary-General*

1. The present report is submitted in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 55/129 of 8 December 2000, the twenty-first resolution adopted since its first consideration of the subject of its thirty-fifth session (resolution 35/13 B of 3 November 1980).

2. The Secretary-General has submitted 19 reports (the most recent being A/55/425) on the steps he has taken in pursuance of those resolutions, including his efforts to prepare the functional feasibility study on establishing the proposed university that was first requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 36/146 G of 16 December 1981. The position of the Government of Israel with regard to the establishment of the university is also set out in those reports.

3. As the Secretary-General has previously indicated (see A/41/457, para. 4), he believes that, in order to comply with the request addressed to him by the General Assembly, it would be necessary to complete the functional feasibility study initiated in pursuance of previous Assembly resolutions. To that end, the Secretary-General again sought the assistance of the Rector of the United Nations University, who, at his request, made available a highly qualified expert, Mihaly Simai, to assist in the preparation of the study. The expert was to visit the area and meet with the relevant Israeli officials, bearing in mind that Israel exercises effective authority in the area concerned.

4. In a note verbale dated 18 July 2001 addressed to the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, the Secretary-General, with reference to the request addressed to him by the General Assembly, requested that the Government of Israel facilitate the visit of the expert, which would take place at a mutually convenient date. Recalling the position taken by the Government of Israel concerning the proposed university, as well as the clarifications already given by the

* The footnote requested by General Assembly resolution 54/248 was not included in the submission.

01-55690 (E) 041001

Secretariat to the questions raised by the Israeli authorities (see A/36/593, annex), the Secretary-General expressed the view that such questions could best be discussed on the occasion of the visit of the United Nations expert.

5. On 17 September 2001, the Permanent Representative of Israel sent the following reply to the Secretary-General:

> "Israel has voted consistently against this resolution and its position remains unchanged. It is clear that the sponsors of this resolution seek to exploit the field of higher education for political purposes totally extraneous to genuine academic pursuits. Accordingly, the Government of Israel is of the opinion that the proposed visit of Dr. Mihaly Simai to Israel would serve no useful purpose."

6. In view of the position taken by the Government of Israel, it has not been possible to complete the functional feasibility study on the proposed university at Jerusalem as planned.